

we will address the low-income energy assistance program and make sure that it is funded at a level that is necessary in order to make sure people are held harmless, and low-income individuals who need energy can afford it to heat their homes and do not have to make difficult choices. But we should all do it within the context of prioritizing the responsibilities of the Federal Government today and not pass our responsibilities today on to our children and our children's children tomorrow by deficit-financing this event.

So we are going to get these instructions. I guess there has been some unanimous consent agreement worked out. There are going to be about seven proposals, instructions to conferees. I just hope that as we go through these instructions people will have the intellectual integrity to ask the question, if they did not vote for the bill, if they did not vote for the budget which was trying to control spending, and they did not vote for the deficit reduction bill which is trying to control spending, why are they coming to the floor and suddenly telling the conferees how they should go about hitting their targets which are part of the bill, which they did not vote for, and they do not support? Maybe we will hear somebody preface their request for instructions with an explanation of that point.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

ASBESTOS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, Libby, MT, is a special place. Libby is a city of more than 2,600 people in Lincoln County, in the northwest corner of Montana. It rests in a valley high in the Rocky Mountains, on the green Kootenai River between the Cabinet and Percell Mountains.

Libby is not a rich city. In 2000, the median family income in Libby was just under \$30,000. That compares with just over \$40,000 in all of Montana, and just over \$50,000 in all of America.

Across the river, and 9 miles northeast of the town, rises a mountain that they call Zonolite Mountain. Until 1990, the W.R. Grace Company used to mine vermiculite there in the mountain.

Vermiculite is shiny mineral. Heat it, and it pops like popcorn. People used to pop vermiculite to make building insulation. They called the popped vermiculite "Zonolite."

The layers of rock where people found the vermiculite contained harmful asbestos. And the vermiculite outside Libby is laced with a especially dangerous type of asbestos, called tremolite.

Tremolite is the most toxic form of asbestos. Tremolite has long fibers that are barbed like fishhooks. These fibers work their way into soft lung tissue. These fibers do not come out.

Until the mid-1970s, W.R. Grace processed the vermiculite mined in Libby

in a nearby mill. The mill was so dusty that workers often could not see their hands on their brooms. Dust was everywhere. Mill workers swept dust outside. They dumped it down the mountainside. I remember seeing employees come out of the mine off the bus so caked with dust I wondered what in the world is going on here. I never knew any working conditions to be so dusty.

The mill's ventilation stack spewed the dust into the air. The ventilation stack released 5,000 pounds of asbestos every day. When the wind blew from the east, a deadly white dust would cover the town.

For decades, 24 hours a day, the dust fell all over Libby. Dust fell on Libby's gardens. Dust fell on Libby's homes. Dust fell on Libby's high school track. Dust fell on Libby's playgrounds.

Some of the vermiculite went downtown to a plant, right next to the baseball diamonds. The plant popped the vermiculite into Zonolite. Batches of Zonolite spilled all around the plant.

Kids played in the Zonolite. People brought home bags of Zonolite to pour into the attics. People put Zonolite in their walls. People put Zonolite in their gardens. People put vermiculite and ore in road beds. People used vermiculite and ore as aggregate in their driveways.

An article in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* would later conclude:

Given the ubiquitous nature of vermiculite contamination in Libby, along with historical evidence of elevated asbestos concentrations in the air, it would be difficult to find participants who could be characterized as unexposed.

Every day, men from the valley went to the mountain to work in the mine and the mill. Every day, these men came home, covered with the fine, deadly white powder.

The powder got into their clothes. The powder got into their curtains. The powder covered their floors.

The fine fibers of tremolite asbestos are easy to inhale. Miners inhaled fibers in the mine. Workers inhaled fibers at the mill. Wives inhaled fibers when they washed their husband's clothes. Children inhaled fibers when they played on the carpet.

And those fibers caused respiratory disease. Those fibers caused a serious lung disease called asbestosis. And those fibers caused a serious form of cancer, mesothelioma, which plagues the chest and abdominal cavities.

Tremolite asbestos causes unique diseases. These diseases are highly progressive and deceptive. These diseases often result in severe impairment or death, without the typical warning markers that show up on x-rays. Without the usual medical signals, the people of Libby often went undiagnosed.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry found that people from Libby suffer from asbestos-related disease at a rate 40-to-60 times the national average. People from Libby suffer from the asbestos cancer

mesothelioma at a rate 100 times the national average.

Because of the W.R. Grace mine and the mill, hundreds of people in Libby died from asbestos-related diseases. And hundreds of current and former area residents are now ill.

The people in Libby will be plagued by asbestos for years to come. These diseases can take 40 years to appear. Hundreds more will fall victim to these diseases in the future.

Now, the people of Libby must watch their neighbors struggle to tend their gardens. They must watch their neighbors struggle to walk to the café. They must watch their neighbors struggle to provide a future for their children. And they must wonder if they, too, will fall ill.

Hundreds of people live in discomfort. Hundreds of people live in pain. "It took my mother 17 months to slowly suffocate," said Gayla Benefield.

After Gayla's mother died in 1996, Gayla and her sister sued W.R. Grace. They brought only the second such lawsuit to be decided by a jury in Libby. W.R. Grace had quietly settled dozens of other claims with agreements of secrecy.

In 1999, the Environmental Protection Agency started to investigate. The EPA found tremolite contamination in the air around the nursery. They found it near the ball fields. They found it inside homes.

The EPA started cleaning up. The entire community of Libby was designated a Superfund site. Libby was listed on the EPA's National Priorities List.

The EPA concluded:

The occurrence of non-occupational asbestos-related disease that has been observed among Libby residents is extremely unusual, and has not been associated with asbestos mines elsewhere, suggesting either very high and prolonged environmental exposures and/or increased toxicity of this form of amphibole asbestos.

The EPA has worked hard. The EPA has shown a good response and solid clean-up work. And the EPA is committed to finishing the job. I commend them. I made many visits to Libby—many, many times. I talked with EPA officials over the years, and I think they have done a pretty good job.

The EPA has identified more than a thousand properties in Libby that still need cleaning up.

The agency has pushed back the timeframe for cleaning up the town from 2004 to 2008. After having been in Libby for 3 years, the agency had completed only 10 percent of the cleanup work needed to give the town a clean bill of health. The EPA must keep Libby a priority.

In 1999, I was the first high-ranking elected official to visit Libby. Since the winter of 1999, I have gone to Libby 16 times. I have worked hard to get funds to help with cleanup, health care, and economic development.

I have looked into the eyes of people in Libby. I have seen mothers and fathers, sister and brothers, husbands

and wives. I have listened to their troubling stories.

In Libby, I heard many concerns of residents who cannot afford their health care. People are sick. Many are getting sicker. They are dying up there. Health care is one of the most pressing needs facing Libby.

In 2000, I helped to establish the Center for Asbestos Related Diseases, or CARD. The CARD clinic has done a tremendous job providing health care and screening for Libby residents. CARD needs additional Federal dollars to provide more and better care.

The healthcare costs of treating asbestos-related disease can be devastating. Simple, routine procedures to help a person breathe more easily can cost more than \$30,000. Those costs continue to add up. They are crippling a community that is struggling to get back on its feet.

The people of Libby face a health care crisis. This crisis was caused by alarming rates of tremolite asbestos-related disease. Treating the sick people in Libby will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. It was caused by no fault of their own, but, I might add, by a company that knew it was damaging and killing the people in that community.

Libby is working to overcome years of asbestos exposure from the W.R. Grace mine. They have been through enough. They did not ask for this lot. Affording quality health care remains one of the biggest hurdles for the town to move forward.

That is why I fought to make sure that asbestos bills working through the Senate addressed the needs of the people of Libby. When, in May of this year, the Judiciary Committee voted to report S. 852, the Fairness in Asbestos Injury Resolution Act, the committee included appropriate language.

The good people of Libby need our help. They are dying up there. They cannot afford health care. I am dedicated to getting them the healthcare treatment that they need and deserve. I made a commitment to the people of Libby and I intend to work together with my colleagues to see that commitment honored.

Asbestos disease has devastated many communities across the country. But tremolite asbestos hit Libby hardest of all. Libby is unique. The type of asbestos at Libby is unique. The duration of exposure at Libby is unique. The manner in which asbestos disease manifests itself in Libby is unique. And the community-wide exposure in Libby was unique. That is why the tailored solution that the Judiciary Committee has proposed makes sense.

I want my colleagues to know that I will fight to defend the Libby provisions in the asbestos bill. Libby is extremely important to me. If the Congress takes out the Libby provisions from the bill, they will lose my vote.

People in Libby are dying from tremolite asbestos exposure. The town has risen mightily to the challenges

that it has faced. But they need our help. They deserve our help.

The people in Libby are working hard to revitalize their economy and their community. They are rightly proud of their resilience and their ability to land on their feet. They deserve all the help that we can give them to make their town whole again.

I urge my colleagues to support the Libby provisions in the asbestos bill. Help us to right this terrible wrong. Help these hundreds of suffering people to get health care and help save the life of this town.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. AL-EXANDER). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I do want to, as I have the privilege of so often doing, express my thanks to my Democratic colleague, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, for his cooperation particularly on this United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement that we were able to unanimously report out of our committee. The reason I want to emphasize "unanimous" isn't just to be complimentary to Senator BAUCUS but also to the people of this country who think that everything done in this Congress is always so partisan, that Republicans and Democrats never get along, that we never talk to each other, that we never agree on anything. I can see why they have that impression because that is the impression the news media of America gives about the Congress of the United States. But as practical matter, nothing gets done in the Senate that isn't somewhat bipartisan, and particularly there is quite a tradition of bipartisanship in our Senate Committee on Finance.

This recent bill that is before us, the United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement, is the latest representation of that bipartisan cooperation.

I thank Senator BAUCUS very much.

I give strong support to the bill S. 2027; that is, the United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.

This legislation is not only good for our U.S. economy, but it is also going to promote free trade, which is an economic issue as it creates jobs, but it also promotes democracy, and it promotes economic stability.

In regard to economic stability, the reason I emphasize that is because the Middle East is seen as an area of the world that is not very stable. I think that enhancing trade with those countries, large or small, is going to bring great economic stability which in turn ought to bring some political stability.

On top of all this, it is going to cement our ties with this small kingdom

of Bahrain. That country is a very strong ally of the United States in that region.

This trade agreement is a clear win for our economy. It will create jobs.

Upon entry into force of this agreement, Bahrain will immediately eliminate 100 percent of its duties on imports of U.S. consumer and industrial products.

U.S. farmers will also benefit. On day one of the agreement, Bahrain will grant duty-free access on 98 percent of its tariff lines that apply to U.S. agricultural as well as food products. Duties with respect to that small remaining 2 percent will be phased out over a period of 10 years.

This is solid market access for U.S. farmers and U.S. manufacturers.

U.S. service providers will also gain from this agreement.

Bahrain will provide substantial market access across its entire service regime. The service provisions of the agreement are based upon a "negative list" approach, which means that all service sectors are covered. In other words, there will be trade in all service sectors unless they are specifically excluded as a result of the list.

Bahrain is already a major center for service providers in the Middle East, and the government recognizes that its service sector can become even stronger through economic liberalization. Because of this agreement, as the region develops, there is going to be very enhanced opportunities for U.S. exporters.

While it is important to note how the United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement will benefit the economy of the United States in the aggregate, it is even more important to point out how it will benefit individual U.S. companies and their workers.

For me, I didn't have to look very far to find Iowa workers and Iowa companies that benefit from this agreement.

For example, the HNI Corporation—it used to be referred to as the HON Corporation—the Fortune 500 company in my State, this company in Muscatine, IA, looks forward to the implementation of this trade agreement. HNI is the second largest manufacturer of office furniture in North America. It is specifically targeting the Bahraini market for increased sales. So HNI employees in Iowa as well as other States will benefit from Senate passage of the agreement.

Workers at the Lennox residential heating and cooling products factory in Marshalltown, IA, also stand to gain from the agreement. Lennox has a strong interest in increasing its sales in Bahrain. Like HNI, Lennox has a presence in many States, so its employees not only in Iowa but throughout the country will benefit from the implementation of this agreement.

Smaller businesses throughout the United States also stand to benefit from this trade agreement. One such company is Midamar Corporation located in Cedar Rapids. The Midamar

Corporation supplies halal food and food service equipment to restaurants, hotels, and distributors throughout the world. This company was started in 1972 by Cedar Rapids native Bill Aossey. When Bill returned to Iowa after serving in the Peace Corps and traveling throughout the Middle East, he came up with the idea of starting a company dedicated to exporting Iowa products. Now, 33 years later, Bill has a lot to show for this hard work. He employs 30 Iowans and the Midamar Corporation is very much a clear success.

I visited the Midamar facility last August and I can report Bill Aossey and his employees are very enthusiastic about this prospect of a trade agreement with Bahrain being implemented so they can even do more business in the Middle East.

Aside from the immediate benefits to United States exporters to Bahrain, this agreement's impact will extend beyond Bahrain. The United States is promoting trade liberalization and economic growth in other countries in the Middle East and this agreement will serve as the template for other trade agreements being negotiated in the region. The solid gains for U.S. farmers, workers, manufacturers, and service providers found in this agreement may be replicated in other free trade agreements of their region.

This has already happened with the country of Oman. The United States recently concluded a free trade agreement with Oman that was based largely upon our agreement with Bahrain so the benefits to HNI Corporation, Lennox, and Midamar that I have identified will be multiplied as other Arab countries adopt free trade agreements with the United States that are based largely upon the Bahrain agreement.

This is all part of a broader goal and that was expressed in May 2000 by President Bush proposing a plan of graduated steps for Middle Eastern nations to increase trade and investment with the United States and others in the world economy, culminating with the establishment of the Middle East Free Trade Agreement by the year 2013. The importance of this vision of President Bush was brought home on July 22, 2004, when the report of the 9/11 Commission was released. That report contains as one of its key recommendations that "comprehensive United States strategy to counterterrorism should include economic policies that encourage development, more open societies and opportunities for people who improve the lives of their families and to enhance the prospect of their children's future."

Our trade agreement with Bahrain is an important achievement in that area and joins previously concluded bilateral trade agreements between the United States and Israel, Jordan, and Morocco. The agreement with Bahrain is an important part of a broader effort to encourage development, more open societies, and opportunities for people to improve the lives of their families

and to enhance prospects for their children's future throughout the Middle East.

Finally, I urge my colleagues to support this bill before the Senate implementing the United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today we begin debate on the free trade agreement between the United States and Bahrain. This is an agreement that strengthens our ties with a stalwart ally in a troubled part of the world. It is an agreement with a leading reformer in the Middle East, and with the most open economy in the Arab world. And it is an agreement worthy of our support.

On the first day of enactment of the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement, 100 percent of trade in manufactured goods will be duty free, opening up markets for U.S. exports of motor vehicles and parts, medical equipment, refrigeration equipment, et cetera. Agricultural exports are also expected to rise, and I hope Montana beef is among them.

The services chapter is the most robust of any agreement the United States has negotiated. Bahrain has promised American companies doing business in the kingdom a regime free of barriers, modern in its regulation, and respectful of intellectual property rights.

For Bahrain, this agreement means greater integration into the world economy, a better environment for its workers, and a pioneering role in the Arab world. For the Middle East as a region, I hope this agreement is a firmly planted seed that will grow prosperity, openness, and stability.

A strong agreement such as this one does not automatically happen. It takes hard work. It takes perseverance, followthrough. It takes vision. Fortunately, the United States and Bahraini officials have these qualities in spades. I applaud their hard work. Ambassador Belooshi—who, I might add, is observing these proceedings close by, very close, I might add—of the Kingdom of Bahrain typifies the courageous action and progressive thinking the Bahrainis have shown through the FTA process, and we should applaud him for it. He has done a super job.

I also applaud Ambassador Rob Portman and his predecessor, Bob Zoellick. Ambassador Zoellick negotiated a strong agreement, and Ambassador Portman saw it through. Ambassador Portman listened to Senators' interests in monitoring Bahrain's end to its boycott of Israel, and together we worked out a solution. He has been equally energetic and flexible in working with my colleagues in the House Ways and Means Committee to alleviate their concerns, especially on labor.

I also applaud the very capable and energetic staff of the USTR. They are dedicated public servants, putting in long hours and endless effort into their work. They do a super job.

This is the first FTA to come before us since the very contentious Central American Free Trade agreement.

The overwhelming support I expect the Bahrain agreement to secure is a testament to what can be achieved when the administration and the Congress work together to address concerns.

The Bahrain FTA shows that when the administration keeps an open dialogue with Congress, we can find common ground and achieve our common goals. I hope that we can continue to build upon the success of this FTA in helping to heal the wounds of previous battles.

I think we have before us a model for open dialogue, and for congressional support for trade liberalization.

I hope that we can take this model and apply it to much larger trading partners and even bolder agreements. Agreements that will open bigger markets, realize greater opportunities, and make our industries even more competitive.

Mr. President, I am pleased to support the U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement. I urge my colleagues to pledge their support as well.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I also take this opportunity to speak on a motion to instruct conferees on the Byrd amendment.

Yesterday, a Senator sent a letter to the majority leader saying he would oppose the reconciliation bill if we used repeal of the Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act to achieve billions in budget savings. While disappointed, I was not surprised. In fact, I say, join the club.

Already, one Senator told me he would oppose reconciliation unless specific provisions on specialty hospitals were not included. Several other Senators threatened to vote against the reconciliation bill unless the MLLC Program was not extended. Another Senator told me he will vote no if we save money by trimming waste from the Medicaid Program. A group of southern Senators said they would vote no on the reconciliation bill if the Grassley provision on payment limits in the farm program became a part of the bill.

So, no savings from the CDSOA repeal; no savings from the MLLC Program; no savings from Medicaid; no savings from payment limits. With everyone threatening to vote "no" there will be no savings in any Federal program, ever.

Everyone says they are for balanced budgets as long as it is someone else whose budget is cut to get the job done—not their pet issue. We need to ask ourselves whether we want to trim the Federal budget or not. If not, what does the Republican Party stand for?

The most egregious threat has to be over budget savings from the repeal of the Continued Dumping and Subsidy